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# Menopause

## FOR DUMMIES<sup>®</sup>

2nd Edition

Marcia L. Jones, PhD

*Former professor and executive*

Theresa Eichenwald, MD

*Practicing physician*

Nancy W. Hall, M.S.

**A Reference for the Rest of Us!**



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***Menopause For Dummies,  
2nd Edition***

**by Nancy W. Hall, M.S.,  
M.Phil.,**



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# About the Authors

**Nancy W. Hall, M.S., M.Phil.**, lived the menopause experience in real life as she wrote this book. In addition to delving into the most up-to-date research on perimenopause, menopause, women's health, and treatments for menopausal symptoms, she relentlessly grilled her friends and a shocking number of complete strangers about their experiences.

Nancy received her Master's degrees in psychology at Yale University. Her interest in various aspects of parenting led her to research and write about all sorts of issues pertaining to children's and women's health and work-life concerns. Nancy has been a contributing editor for both *Child* magazine and *Parents* magazine, and a frequent contributor to other parenting, women's, and health magazines and Web sites. Her books on child development, family policy, and health include *Balancing Pregnancy and Work: How to Make the Most of the Next 9 Months on the Job* (Rodale, 2004).

Nancy is the mom of a son and a daughter (both keepers). When she's not writing books and magazine articles about these and other topics, she knits, bakes artisan breads, raises bees, and studies goju ryu karate.

**Marcia L. Jones, PhD**, has life experience in fertility treatment, perimenopause, and menopause. In 1991, while attempting to start a family at the age of 38, she scoured bookstores searching for down-to-earth

information on the likely problems and how to proceed. Her doctor directed her to the only information available at the time, photocopies of technical articles from medical journals and pamphlets written by pharmaceutical companies trying to sell product. Today, many women are delaying childbirth, so the issue of fertility fits nicely into a discussion of perimenopause and menopause. These experiences served as her primary motivation for writing this book. She became certain that women in their mid-thirties to late forties need current, unbiased, reliable information on perimenopause and menopause written for a layperson.

Thanks to the efforts of her doctor Jane Chihal, MD, a contributor to this book and a recognized expert on menopause and fertility, Dr. Jones was the proud mother of two girls ages 6 and 4.

Dr. Jones received her PhD from Southern Methodist University in anthro-pology. She led many research expeditions in the Middle East and served as an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Tulsa.

Growing weary of academia, Marcia shifted her career focus and entered the fast-paced world of software, achieving the rank of chief operating officer and co-owner of Criterion, a company that developed human-resource software for Fortune 1000 organizations. She grew Criterion from a \$1.5 million company to a \$10 million company and recently sold it to Peopleclick. During the past 18 years, she has written many articles on people in the workforce and taught courses in the use of human-resource technology as an adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Management at the University of Dallas.

**Theresa Eichenwald** has extensive experience caring for menopausal women as an internist at hospitals in New York, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, and, most recently, Texas. She has taught at Albert Einstein School of Medicine and Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

In addition to teaching and caring for patients, Dr. Eichenwald has authored a number of articles for professional journals, covering topics such as breast cancer and ovarian tumors, as well as patient education pamphlets. She is a member of the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, and in medical school participated in the American Medical Student Association Task Force on Aging.

# Dedication

To David, through all the ages, and to Wilson and Meg,  
through all the stages.

# Author's Acknowledgments

My work could not have been accomplished without the solid foundation, wit, and wisdom of the first edition's authors, the late Marcia L. Jones, PhD and Theresa Eichenwald, MD.

Special thanks to Leslie Connor and Sandi Kahn Shelton for always, always being there for me, and to Leslie, Sandi, and to Judy Theiss and the many other women with whom I spoke for graciously sharing their time and their own experiences. Thanks, too, to the hundreds of thousands of women who unselfishly participate every day in health studies and clinical trials that benefit millions of us. It's not hot in here after all, but it's nice to know it's not just me.

A huge thank you to Marilyn Allen, who put me in the right place at precisely the right time.

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# Introduction

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We wrote this book to give women of all ages a clear view of the physical, mental, and emotional changes related to menopause. For generations, women of all ages have approached menopause without knowing specifically what it would mean for them. Oh, you probably knew that menopause and hot flashes go hand in hand, but even that information isn't always true. The truth is that you may never have a hot flash, and if you do, it will probably be years before you're menopausal. Common knowledge about menopause is still too often dominated by myth and misinformation. (The medical community didn't even officially recognize the link between estrogen and hot flashes until 1974!)

If menopause only concerned a small group of people on a desert island, this lack of information might be understandable. But over half of the world's population will become menopausal one day. Menopause has been the misfit family member of the research community for years: a collection of symptoms and a very real phenomenon, but not a disease. Even medical textbooks pay scant attention to the topic. Today, one group is paying attention to menopause. The pharmaceutical industry sees great opportunity in the field of menopause, and more research is underway. If you're looking for books to help reasonably intelligent women navigate the journey of menopause, your options are still

somewhat limited to a choice between pretty, glossy pamphlets published by drug companies who may just be a tiny bit biased in their recommendations, or books that promote the natural aspects of menopause with such ferocity that you may feel guilty wishing for relief from troublesome symptoms. If you're really persistent, you will find some academic articles in medical journals, but your eyes could glaze over as you try to pick out straightforward answers to your practical questions. We hope this book can fill that void. Our goal is to help you digest the research so you can make objective and informed health decisions based on your own experience with menopause.

Menopause is not a disease — that's true. No one is going to die from menopause or its symptoms, but every day, women die from the medical effects of low estrogen levels. Your risks of certain diseases and cancers rise after menopause. Some folks may respond to that statement with one of their own, "Well, that's because women are older when they go through menopause." True again, but it's also true that estrogen plays a role in an amazing number of functions in your body, some of which protect your organs, increase your immunity, and slow degeneration. This transformation we call menopause impacts our health in very significant ways. This book helps you understand the story behind the symptoms and the diseases.

Some women choose to use hormone therapy to relieve symptoms associated with menopause and protect their

body from disease. The choice of whether to take hormones or not is quite controversial because hormone therapy has its own significant set of risks. The debate goes on in the medical community and media concerning the risks of hormone therapy. If you're like many women, your confusion only grows as you read more on the subject. Each new study seems to contradict the findings of the last one. You're an intelligent person. But how can you know which study you should believe? In this book, we try to provide enough information to enable you to make informed decisions about your health.

## **About This Book**

We have no agenda in writing this book. We're not trying to sell you medications, alternative health strategies, or remedies. This book presents accurate and up-to-date information from the most credible sources. It contains straightforward information based on reliable medical studies without the academic lingo common to medical journals. When no clear-cut answers exist and when quality research shows mixed conclusions, we let you know.

Everyone's time is limited, so we cut to the chase. We cover the questions that are important to you during this phase of your life. If you want more detail, we provide an appendix full of resources to help with your personal research. We also try not to stray too far from the topic at hand. For example, during the years leading up to

menopause, women may have difficulty getting pregnant. The same hormonal changes that cause those annoying symptoms prior to menopause also stifle fertility. Many women in their late 30s who are trying to get pregnant rely on hormone supplements. Despite the overlap in hormonal terms, fertility is not a concern for many women going through the change, so our discussion is limited.

Whether you're going through the change, have already been there, or are about to start off down that road, you'll find the information you need between these snazzy yellow and black covers. We cover all the health issues and therapy choices that confront women during the menopausal years.

## **Foolish Assumptions**

Every author has to make a few assumptions about her audience, and we've made a few assumptions about you:

- ✓ You're a woman. (But, believe it or not, your treatment choices can have implications for the guy in your life, so we'll talk just a tiny bit about his health, too.)
- ✓ You want to understand what's going on with your body.

- ✓ You're looking for straight talk for real people as opposed to scientific jargon and Medicaese (though we have a Medicaese icon to invite you into short — optional — forays into this territory).
- ✓ You want to evaluate your risks of disease as you pass through midlife and move into your menopausal years.
- ✓ You don't want a book that claims to let you diagnose yourself or figure out what medications you need. You have a medical advisor to discuss these things with.
- ✓ You want to be able to ask intelligent questions and discuss treatment alternatives with your healthcare providers.
- ✓ You want to feel more confident about the quality of your healthcare.
- ✓ You buy every book that has a black and yellow cover.

If any of these statements apply to you, you're in the right place.

# How This Book Is Organized

We've organized this book into five parts so you can go directly to the topic that interests you the most. Here's a brief overview of each part: